

BULGARIAN HIERARCHS CONCELEBRATE WITH UKRAINIAN SCHISMATICS IN ISTANBUL

Istanbul, May 20, 2024

Photo: Romfea

For the first time, hierarchs of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church concelebrated with representatives of the graceless “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” sect yesterday at Life-giving Spring Monastery in Istanbul.

In particular, Metropolitans Nicholas of Plovdiv, Cyprian of Stara Zagora, Iakov of Dorostol, and Bishops Zion of Velichka and Vissarion of Smolyan of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church served with Patriarch Bartholomew and various hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as well as “Archbishop” Evtstraty (Zorya) and “Bishop” Avraamy (Latish) of the schismatic OCU, reports [Romfea](#).

Latish is the sole monk of the Kiev Caves Lavra who decided to [leave the Church](#), in order to become the “abbot” of the schismatics’ Lavra brotherhood, and subsequently a “bishop.”

It is notable that the Bulgarian hierarchs concelebrated with OCU “bishops” today without the backing of a relevant Synodal decision, just as [Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria](#) and [Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus](#) also unilaterally decided to recognize the schismatics, without a Synodal decision.

The Bulgarian Synod created a commission to study the Ukrainian question back in [November 2018](#), though it never finished its work and the Synod never made a decision addressing the OCU.

Interestingly, the commission was headed by Met. Cyprian of Stara Zagora, one of the hierarchs who concelebrated with the schismatics yesterday.

[Just five years ago](#), he praised the canonical primate, His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine, saying: “I was very impressed by the words and prayer of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry—he is a man deeply immersed in prayer and spiritual questions. I am certain that with such a primate, the Church will be one, apostolic, and catholic.”

But the Bulgarian hierarch has now decided to stand with “Metropolitan” Epiphany and his sect.

The move from the Bulgarian hierarchs comes just two months after the [repose of His Holiness Patriarch Neofit of Bulgaria](#), as the Bulgarian Church is gearing up to elect its next primate. Met. Nicholas of Plovdiv, who also concelebrated with the schismatics, is in the running.

Pat. Bartholomew, who presided over Pat. Neofit's funeral, made it clear that he is heavily invested in who becomes the next Bulgarian primate. He also took the OCU's Epiphany Dumenko and Evstraty Zorya with him to [Pat. Neofit's funeral](#).

Similarly, in [November 2019](#), Bishop Isaiah (Slaninka) of Šumperk of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia served with the schismatics, though the Czech-Slovak Synod has remained firm in its Orthodox stance of supporting canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

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